

The Planner

Schoharie County Planning and Development

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Public Hearing Scheduled For Farm Protection Plan

The Town of Wright Town Board will be the first in Schoharie County to hold a Public Hearing on their Draft Municipal Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan. The Public Hearing will be held on Monday, April 19th at 7 PM at the Gallupville House on Route 443 in the Hamlet of Gallupville. Copies of the Draft Plan are available at the Town Hall in Gallupville and by visiting <http://www.schohariecounty-ny.gov/CountyWebSite/townwri> and clicking on the “**Agriculture & Farmland Protection Plan**” under the **Town Links**. All residents and landowners are encouraged to read the plan and come to the Public Hearing to comment on it.

The Municipal Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan has been developed by the Town of Wright Agriculture and Farmland Plan Committee with guidance from American Farmland Trust. The development of this plan was made possible by a \$25,000 grant from the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets Agricultural and Farmland Protection Program, which supports local efforts to protect agricultural land and ensure the economic viability of the agricultural industry. While developing the Plan, the Committee inventoried agricultural activities in Wright, created a map of active agricultural lands, conducted community outreach with farmers, landowners, and the general public, formulated goals, and drafted recommendations for how those goals can be achieved.

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2010 Agricultural Districts Open Enrollment Period



The Schoharie County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board held the 4th Annual Agricultural District Open Enrollment Period from January 30 to February 28, 2010. Four applications and nine parcels have been proposed to be added to the Agricultural Districts. (Continued on page 2)

Spring Floodplain and Stormwater Workshops in Oneonta, NY. Two-Day Workshop Series on May 4-5, 2010. See “Upcoming Trainings” on page 6 for more details on this and other training opportunities.

Public Hearing, cont'd

The Plan includes information on the current state of agriculture in Wright, a discussion on the environmental and recreational benefits of farmland and the economic impacts of agriculture and projection of the future of farming in Town. Five long term goals to promote agriculture in Wright are proposed as are a variety of recommendations to achieve those goals. Recommendations range from ways to encourage existing farmers to ways to involve the public in agriculture. The Plan also includes suggestions on how to implement the recommendations over the next five years.

Draft plans will also soon be available for three other Schoharie County towns currently working on Municipal Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plans.

“The Public Hearing will be held on Monday, April 19th at 7 PM at the Gallupville House on Route 443 in the Hamlet of Gallupville. Copies of the Draft Plan are available at the Town Hall in Gallupville and [online].”

2010 Open Enrollment, cont'd

The purpose of agricultural districting is to encourage the continued use of farmland for agricultural production. The program is based on a combination of landowner incentives and protections, all of which are designed to forestall the conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses. Included in these benefits are preferential real property tax treatment (agricultural assessment and special benefit assessment), and protections against overly restrictive local laws, government funded acquisition or construction projects, and private nuisance suits involving agricultural practices.

One of the most important benefits of the Agricultural Districts Program is the opportunity provided farmland owners to receive real property assessments based on the value of their land for agricultural production rather than on its development value. Statewide, farmers receiving agricultural assessment collectively save over \$70 million annually.

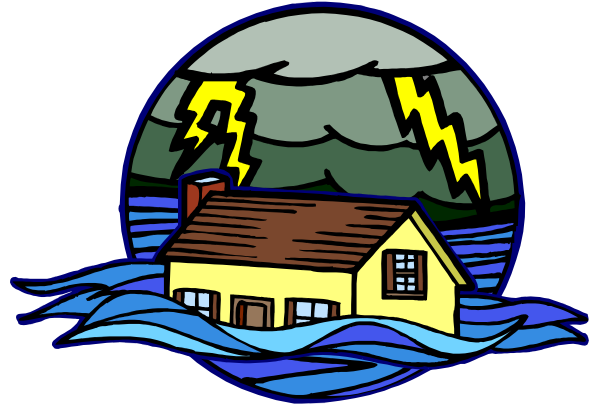
This year's applications were reviewed by the County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board at their meeting, Monday, April 12, 2010 and the recommended parcel additions will be made to the County Board of Supervisors for adoption. A public hearing will be held in June at the County Supervisors' regular meeting and final recommendations for parcel inclusion will be sent to the Commissioner of Agriculture for final approval.

For more information about the Agricultural Districts Program please contact Michele Strobeck, Agricultural Marketing Specialist.



Flood Damage Prevention Law – Optional Additional Language

In 2004, Schoharie County municipalities adopted their Flood Damage Prevention Laws containing language that complies with the floodplain management requirements of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) contained in federal regulations 44 CFR 60.3 through 44 CFR 60.6. These requirements are **minimum** requirements for participation in the NFIP. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has calculated that buildings built to these standards suffer 70% less flood related damage than unprotected buildings. However, they can still suffer damage, so higher protection levels are warranted in most instances. For example, floods can be higher than the base flood elevation for various reasons, including larger storms, downstream obstructions, increased watershed development and floodplain filling. Setting higher standards protects against these risks.



The NYS DEC has developed “Optional Additional Language” that can be incorporated into a Town or Village’s current Flood Damage Prevention Law. This is optional language, as stated above, and would create higher regulatory standards in regards to floodplain development. It is essential to determine if these changes would be warranted for your particular municipality. These optional ideas, if added to your current flood damage prevention law, can potentially provide the municipality with a decrease in a community’s flood risk. Please be advised when considering updating or adopting new language to a current law it should not be considered lightly. If a municipality decides to amend their current flood damage prevention law, review of the proposed local law amendments needs to be performed by multiple sources, including the municipal attorney, members of the public, Schoharie County Planning Commission and NYS DEC (to review final language assuring compliance with FEMA regulations). An environmental review would also need to take place.

If a community decides to move forward with these optional amendments, please contact the Schoharie County Planning and Development Agency for assistance. Currently, this optional language can be found on the Schoharie County Planning and Development Agency’ website at: <http://www.schohariecounty-ny.gov/CountyWebSite/Planning/femaforms.html>.

“It is essential to determine if these changes would be warranted for your particular municipality. If a municipality decides to amend their current flood damage prevention law, review of the proposed local law amendments needs to be performed by multiple sources. An environmental review would also need to take place.”



(Information for article from NYS DEC Optional Additional Language)

Schoharie County Purchases Additional Floodplain Homes

With funding from the New York State funded Greater Catskill Flood Remediation Program (GCFRP), Schoharie County recently purchased three flood prone properties in the Village of Middleburgh. The GCFRP is being administered by the New York Division of Housing and Community Renewal. The program is a one time, State funding source to purchase income eligible homes that have been damaged in past floods and are in danger of future flooding. The three homes purchased on Baker Avenue in Middleburgh are all located in the floodplain of the Schoharie Creek and one of the homes is located in the floodway. This spring and early summer, the County will perform archaeological and environmental studies in preparation for demolishing all structures on the properties. The debris will be moved off site and the land will be returned to use as flood plain. Only uses compatible with open space will be allowed in the future.



Acquisition and demolition of flood prone residences has been the most aggressive flood hazard mitigation measure utilized in Schoharie County since the devastating flooding of 1996. Approximately forty vulnerable structures have been purchased and removed from floodplains throughout Schoharie County since that time. Most of the purchased properties are located along Schoharie Creek, but some purchases have taken place on the Catskill and Cobleskill Creeks. Thirty-seven of the structures were purchased with funding through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP). Seventy-five percent of eligible project costs were reimbursed through this program. With the GCFRP, one hundred percent of the cost was provided. This amount was a major enticement for sellers in the GCFRP as they received full market value for their properties. In total, more than 2 million dollars in grant funds have been used for acquisition and demolition to protect the County's floodplains.

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Currently, a request for bids is being drafted and the County anticipates demolition to occur in late May through June. The entire project must be completed by June 30, 2010. Please contact our Agency if you know of a full time residence in the County that has suffered from flood damages and may be a candidate for a floodplain acquisition program.

Schoharie Watershed Tour in June

This year's annual Schoharie Watershed Tour, to be held on June 19th at the Hunter-Tannersville Elementary School, will highlight the impacts of acid rain and mercury deposition in the Schoharie basin. The tour will showcase two innovative projects dealing with leachate pollution filtration and renewable energy. The Hunter Landfill Wetlands and small-scale wind turbine system will illustrate the benefits of constructed wetlands and the connections between renewable energy and water quality. Senior Scientist, Gary Lovett, from the Cary Institute for Ecosystem Studies will present on threats to the Catskill forest including impacts to the watershed from climate change, air pollution, and invasion of non-native forest insects. Representatives from the Town of Hunter's Climate Smart Communities Task Force will be on hand to discuss the benefits that program is having for their community. Rene' VanSchaack, Community Natural Resource Solutions, will lead the tour highlighting the functions of the constructed wetlands treatment system and the innovative wind turbine at the site.



Nate Hendricks of CWC demonstrating how pervious surfaces can be utilized to limit the impacts of stormwater and improve water quality in the watershed.

The format will be as follows:

*8:30 - 9:00am - registration (Hunter-Tannersville Elementary School cafeteria, Main Street Hunter)

*9:00 - 10:15/10:30am - Welcome remarks and presentations:

1. Research on acid rain (IES)
2. Town of Hunter Task Force (representative) - describe state program, what community hopes to gain by participating
3. Rene' VanSchaack - overview of wetland site visit

*Break before boarding bus to head to Hunter Landfill

*10:30/10:45 - 11:45am - site visit to Hunter Landfill and wind turbines

*Noon - return to Hunter Elementary School

“The tour will showcase two innovative projects dealing with leachate pollution filtration and renewable energy.”

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Upcoming Training/Grant Opportunities

*New York State Association of Floodplain and Stormwater Managers and the Delaware County Soil and Water Conservation District are co-sponsoring a Two-Day Workshop Series May 4-5, 2010 at the Holiday Inn, 5206 State Highway 23, Oneonta NY 13820. For workshop information contact: Jen Marcy (jkmarcy@pbsj.com). For registration info, contact Bill Necheman (518-402-8146 or wsnecham@gw.dec.state.ny.us)

*10th Annual Finance and Management School – May 5-7 in Rochester; May 12-14 in Saratoga.

<http://www.nytowns.org/core/events/events.aspx>

*2010 Highway School June 7-9 in Ithaca. <http://www.nytowns.org/core/events/eventdetails.aspx?meeting=10HIGH>

*DOS Training for CEOs: <http://www.dos.state.ny.us/lgss/training.htm>

*NEW: Guidelines for Live Fire Training Evolutions

All live fire training shall be conducted in accordance with National Fire Protection Association Standard (NFPA) 1403, Standard on Live Fire Training Evolutions, 2007 edition. (<http://www.dos.state.ny.us/fire/training.htm>)

*NY Planning Federation Zoning School: <http://www.nypf.org/zoningschool.htm>

*The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is providing financial assistance through the Volunteer Fire Assistance Grant program. The grant is a 50/50 matching funds program. Its purpose is to make funds available to rural fire companies for the purchase of small equipment, such as portable backpack pumps, Nomex protective clothing, hand tools, hardhats, small-diameter hoses, portable radios and dry hydrants. Rural fire companies eligible. Rewards not to exceed \$1,000. Deadline for applications is May 15, 2010. For more information contact Joseph Zeglen (jjzeglen@gw.dec.state.ny.us) or visit www.dec.ny.gov/regulations/2364.html.

Updating Beaver Dam Data

Maps showing active or potential beaver dam sites have been created for each town in the County. Areas marked as having beaver dams have been selected because there are either known dams or the land meets the basic needs of beavers, as shown by aerial photography.

These maps have been provided to town supervisors and will be publicly displayed so that concerned and knowledgeable individuals can provide input, both to indicate areas with beaver activity that are not currently shown and to correct areas that are improperly mapped. Currently known dams and dams that we are alerted to will be visited by staff equipped with GPS units and the data collected will be part of a continuously evolving database of beaver activity in the County. Maps will be collected in June for updates to our database.

Everyone is encouraged to take a look at these maps and if you have any information about beaver dams, particularly those that are on private lands and/or not visible from roads, please share that with us either by marking them on the provided maps or calling our office and asking for Zach Thompson.